



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **FIRST Robotics “Hueneme Port Regional” takes place at FATHOMWERX Lab for Third Consecutive Year**

*Over 1,500 high school students from around the world will showcase their engineering skills and innovations at the Port of Hueneme.*

**[PORT HUENEME, CA – March 6, 2024]** – The Port of Hueneme and City of Port Hueneme are thrilled to host the FIRST Robotics *Hueneme Port Regional* Competition in their vibrant coastal community. The competition takes place over two weekends from March 1-3, 2024 and March 9 & 10, 2024 located onsite at the Port of Hueneme in the FATHOMWERX lab — a collaborative space for innovation and technology transfer between the Port, the Naval Base Ventura County, the Economic Development Collaborative, and Matter Labs.

The exhilarating event brings over 1,500 high school students from across the world together along with their 51 life-sized robots to test the power of collaboration and measure the effectiveness of innovations and is made possible in part through the Port of Hueneme & City of Port Hueneme’s joint Community Benefit Fund. First Robotics is an exemplary partner as their mission not only fosters creativity and technical prowess but also focuses on strengthening community bonds. Support of their work is crucial as it empowers young minds, encourages innovation, and ensures a brighter future for our coastal community.

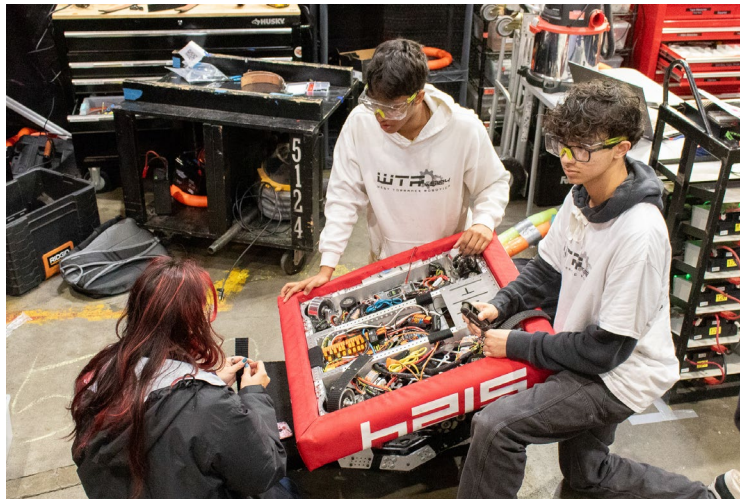


*First Robotics Hueneme Port Regional Competition.*



“We are delighted to bring the FIRST Robotics Competition to the Port of Hueneme for the third year in a row. This event showcases the amazing talents and skills of our students, who are the future innovators and leaders of our society,” said Velma Lomax, Regional Director for FIRST Robotics in Southern California. “We are grateful to the Port of Hueneme, Naval Base Ventura County, FATHOMWERX, and all of our sponsors and volunteers for their support and collaboration.”

The FIRST Robotics Competition is an international program that challenges high school students to design, build, and program robots to compete in a themed game. The theme for the 2024 competition is “CRESCENDO” and focuses on the importance of renewable energy and how robotics and technology can help solve the global energy crisis. The students will work in teams of more than 35 students, mentored by teachers, engineers, and industry professionals, to create robots that can perform various tasks such as picking up items shooting them across the field, and traversing obstacles.



*Students preparing their robot for the competition.*

“The innovative spirit I see in these students is exactly what the Navy and the nation needs as we deliver and sustain increasingly complex combat systems to our Fleet,” said Michael Ladner, NSWC PHD Deputy Technical Director. “I’m also impressed not only by their ability to integrate mechanical, electrical, and software components into their robots, but also with their experiences with teaming, collaboration, problem solving and conflict resolution. Those are skillsets that will support them in whatever careers they pursue.”

The Hueneme Port Regional featured teen students from local and state school districts, in addition to teams from China, the Netherlands, and Chinese Taipei. The teams will compete for awards and a chance to advance to the FIRST Championship — a global celebration of STEM education and innovation. This event is free and open to the public and spectators are welcome to watch the exciting matches, interact with the teams, and learn more about robotics and engineering.



*Students preparing their robot for the competition.*

"We are honored to host this amazing event at the Port of Hueneme where we can celebrate the power of collaboration, creativity, and innovation!" said Celina Zacarias, President of the Oxnard Harbor District. "Thank you to all the students showcasing their STEM skills and creative power to solve real-world challenges, we are thrilled to support your passion and potential. To the Teachers, thank you for instilling in our students the love of learning, inspiring hope, and igniting their imagination."



*Oxnard Harbor District President, Celina Zacarias, and City of Port Hueneme Mayor Pro Tem, Martha McQueen-Leghon, receiving a tour of the pits from robotics students.*

During the opening ceremony, Mayor Pro Tem Martha McQueen-Leghon, of the City of Port Hueneme, addressed the large crowd of eager participants by extending a welcome on behalf of the city.

"I am so excited! This is my second time at the event," McQueen-Leghon said. "It is our pleasure that we welcome you to the 'Friendly City by the Sea.' To those near and far, we thank you for being here and for visiting the Port of Hueneme — one of the city's greatest partners."





*(Left to right) Martha McQueen-Legohn, Mayor Pro-Tem City of Port Hueneme; Cody Reese, NAVFAC; Celina Zacarias, President of the Oxnard Harbor District; Anthony Avila, Office of Congresswoman Julia Brownley; Laura Hernandez, Port Hueneme Councilmember; Bryan MacDonald, Mayor Pro-Tem City of Oxnard; Vianey Lopez, Ventura County Supervisor; and Patty Quiroz, Office of Assemblymember Steve Bennet.*

During the opening ceremony, the Port of Hueneme and the City of Port Hueneme presented a check donation to FIRST Robotics in the amount of \$5,000 from their Community Benefit Fund. The CBF was established in 2015 by the Port of Hueneme and the City of Port Hueneme to achieve the mutual goal of enriching the community through a spirit of collaboration. The Port and City crafted an agreement that states if the Port's annual revenue exceeds \$13 million, a total of \$100,000 in Port funds is allocated to the CBF. The Port and City then come together to vote on how to invest this funding in the community. Both the Port and City unanimously agreed to support the First Robotics competition.

"It is an honor to represent the Ventura County Board of Supervisors and the diverse and vibrant communities of District 5," said Ventura County Supervisor, Vianey Lopez. "The Port of Hueneme is a hub for innovation and collaboration, with a strong network of educational institutions, government agencies, industry partners, and entrepreneurial organizations that foster creativity, growth, and solutions for the global challenges of today and tomorrow. I am especially excited to support the FIRST Robotics Competition at the Port of Hueneme, where we celebrate these achievements and potential of our young innovators and leaders in STEM."

The robotics competition is made possible by the generous support of sponsors, such as the Gene Haas Foundation & Haas Automation, the leading manufacturer of CNC machine tools in the U.S., and the Community Benefit Fund, a joint initiative of the Port of Hueneme and the City of Port Hueneme to enrich the community through various projects and programs.



*Students preparing their robot for the competition.*

“NAVFAC/EXWC proudly supports the First Robotics Competition in the City of Port Hueneme alongside our host FATHOMWERX collaborative base,” Mark Campbell NAVFAC EXWC STEM Manager and STEM Federal Action Officer. “Year after year, our continuous support and team commitment showcase and continue to elevate the innovation and impact of this fantastic youth robotic organization. First, it brings life and excitement to what is often technologically imaginative for our youth. The dedication of these STEM students captivates and solidifies this year's theme: “The Future is Yours to Create.”

### About FIRST®

*FIRST® is a robotics community that prepares young people for the future through a suite of inclusive, team-based robotics programs for ages 4-18 (PreK-12) that can be facilitated in school or in structured afterschool programs. Boosted by a global support system of volunteers, educators, and sponsors that include over 200 of the Fortune 500 companies, teams operate under a signature set of FIRST Core Values to conduct research, fundraise, design, build, and showcase their achievements during annual challenges. An international not-for-profit organization founded by accomplished inventor Dean Kamen in 1989, FIRST has a proven impact on STEM learning, interest, and skill- building well beyond high school. Alumni of FIRST programs gain access to exclusive scholarships, internships, and other opportunities that create connections and open pathways to a wide variety of careers. Learn more at [firstinspires.org](http://firstinspires.org).*

### About FATHOMWERX

*FATHOMWERX is a public-private laboratory, community, and resource for technological innovation that fuses small and non-traditional companies, academic institutions, and other Department of Defense stakeholders together to work on the most challenging problems in the port and maritime domains. FATHOMWERX's dynamic platform is designed to create a high rate of return for all participants. Through the promotion of divergent thought, neutral facilitation, and the use of a growing ecosystem, the goal of FATHOMWERX is to bring the right minds together to solve challenging problems. The Founding Partners of FATHOMWERX are the Ventura County Economic Development Collaborative, Port of Hueneme, Naval Surface Warfare Center, and Matter Labs.*



### About the Port of Hueneme

*The Port of Hueneme is one of the most productive and efficient commercial trade gateways for niche cargo on the West Coast. Five locally elected Port Commissioners govern the Port. The Port consistently ranks among the top ten U.S. Ports for automobiles and fresh produce. Port operations support the community by bringing \$2.8 billion in economic activity and creating 24,997 trade-related jobs. Trade through the Port of Hueneme generates more than \$236 million in direct and related state and local taxes, which fund vital community services. In 2017, the Port of Hueneme became the first Port in California to become Green Marine certified and was voted the Greenest Port in the U.S. at the Green Shipping Summit. [www.Portofh.org](http://www.Portofh.org).*

*To learn more about the Community Benefit Fund visit: <https://www.portofhueneme.org/cbf>.*

### About the City of Port Hueneme

*The City of Port Hueneme (pronounced "Why-nee-mee") is a unique community along Ventura County's Gold Coast just south of the City of Oxnard and Channel Islands Harbor. Port Hueneme is unique because of its rich history, culture, and traditions, dating back to the Chumash Indians who made their home here for centuries and because of its long-established, close relationship with the Port, U.S. Navy's Port Hueneme and Point Mugu naval facilities. For more information visit: <https://www.ci.port-hueneme.ca.us/>*